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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

**INFORMATION REPORT**

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COUNTRY French West Africa

SUBJECT Observations on Labor Affairs in the Several  
Territories/Problems of the Application of  
the Labor CodePLACE ACQUIRED  
(BY SOURCE)DATE ACQUIRED  
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DATE DISTR. 5 MAY 1954

NO. OF PAGES 4

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO  
REPORT NO.

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NIGER

1. French officials in Niamey, Niger, have found the application of the Labor Code extremely difficult. They like to illustrate the hopeless inapplicability of many features of the Metropolitan labor laws to the African situation. Family allowances do not go to children as intended but to the African father who is thereby encouraged to become more polygamous than ever. The forty hour week is meaningless to the African sense of time which makes little distinction as between one hour and two or three hours. A native who is supposed to appear for work at seven o'clock will arrive a half hour late and feel that he has done well to have come at all. If strictly adhered to, the Labor Code would mean a lack of social and economic progress, according to these officials. The new laws and pay scales make African labor as costly as any labor in the world relative to output. As a result, many independent firms in Niger are importing white specialized labor and foremen. Such people are the African's greatest enemies because they are fundamentally competitive. The imported workers belong to the class of petits blancs whom the Africans can easily distinguish from the other whites. Various new tensions follow from the presence of European workers in increasing numbers, and the French officials think it is unwise to import petits blancs when it is the policy of the Government to create a class of grands noirs. Hence the administration is pushing ahead harder with the technical training of Africans although many officials feel that they must be careful not to train more Africans than the local technology can absorb.

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2. The labor unions in Niger are not well organized. The break with Communism of the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA) altered somewhat the nature of relations between the RDA and labor in Niger, but the RDA still dominates the labor union programs. All but a few of the labor organizations go along with the RDA, the remainder being affiliated with the Confederation Generale du Travail (CGT).

FRENCH SUDAN

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3. [REDACTED] in Bamako, French Sudan. The current administration has taken a generally strong hand with labor. The application of the Labor Code in the French Sudan has amounted to a wage increase of approximately 18 percent; the budget could not stand any more. The previous territorial governor was far too ambitious with his urbanization and building program and he involved Sudanese finances too deeply to permit any greater leniency. The people are paying heavy taxes for his enthusiasm.
4. Sudanese labor unions are divided in their political allegiance between the Union Progressiste and the Union Soudanese (local name for the RDA). Both these parties are wholly African. The third party in Niger, the Reunion of the French People, is very small and exclusively European. It has no labor support.

FRENCH GUINEA

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5. [REDACTED] of French Guinea, an old Indo-chinese hand. Parisot has applied the Labor Code in Guinea gradually, availing himself of the leeway given to territorial governors. The crux of the problem has been labor's demand for the same pay for a 40 hour week as for the old 48 hour week. He said the efficiency of local labor is low and that the economy of Guinea could not sustain such an increase. He has compromised by giving 44 hour wages for a 40 hour work week and by trying at the same time to reduce the cost of living for natives. He has been successful in this latter effort to the extent of five-six percent which, together with the wage increase, is roughly equivalent to the 20 percent increase in real wages called for by the Code. [REDACTED] said that many people might consider him a reactionary but that he has acted in accordance with the present capabilities of the local economy, and he believes that it would be irresponsible for him to have acted otherwise.

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6. [REDACTED] a teacher in Conakry, French Guinea, He is married to a metisse. Unskilled workers in Guinea earn 168 CFA (French colonial francs) a day. Skilled labor is divided into nine categories, the scale for each of which ranges between 250 and 300 CFA a day. This is barely enough. Increases are necessary for skilled workers, especially since there are so many hangers-on in the families of Africans with fairly good jobs. Labor is well organized in Guinea with the membership dues of between five hundred and six hundred CFA a year well within the ability of most workers to pay. The workers are organized into corps which are in turn affiliated with the CGT, the Force Ouvriere, or the Confederation Francaise des Travailleurs Chretiens (CFTC). Each corps elects a central committee to run its affairs and represent it in the larger units. Blau, confirming Governor Parisot, said the Guinea budget would make it difficult for the administration to raise wages 20 percent but that the private employers could manage it. He identified the local African labor leader as one (fnu) Sar (phonetic) whom he described as an authentic Communist who attends Communist meetings in Paris and Eastern Europe.

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7. [REDACTED] The strikes in Guinea /as of late [REDACTED] were affecting bauxite production to some extent but not seriously. No functionaries, only laborers, were

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involved in the strikes. Nearly all the workers in Guinea are unionized but this does not necessarily mean that they pay their dues or even understand what unionism is all about. Most of the recent labor troubles have concerned the application of the Labor Code. The Societe des Bauxite du Midi employs mainly unskilled African labor which is paid 165 CFA a day. A few skilled workers receive several hundred CFA a day. My informants said that those who have gone on strike would not be taken back and that there would be no trouble replacing them. The mine is sufficiently mechanized so that as long as a crew of skilled Europeans is on the job, production can continue with such unskilled Africans as care to show up. There is a chance that the same thing will happen on this strike as happened with the railroad strike in 1947-48. After the case was taken through the arbitration courts the union refused to abide by the decision, and when the reviewing authorities made concessions to the union, the strike leaders were taken back to work but the small fry were out. The bauxite company has provided the native workers with good quarters. The former residences of the Europeans who set up the installation have been divided into two-family houses for the workers. They are equipped with electricity, running water, and kitchens. The African workers have their own movie theater on the mine premises.

25X1X IVORY COAST

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He knows of only one plantation in all of the Ivory Coast (a place near Abidjan) which has been organized through an invasion. Immigrant labor, on which the Ivory Coast is largely dependent, is unstable and must be given free housing, medical care, and food at cost. Their needs are few and many of them are able to save money. Savings of 25-30 thousand CFA, a figure which some of them reach, makes an African laborer a rich man. [redacted] has known a few semi-skilled, and therefore somewhat better paid, Africans who have saved enough to start out on their own as planters. Oumé is a very wealthy community, according to [redacted] and probably has more money in circulation than any other Ivory Coast area in spite of its dependence on world markets.

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Virtually all the unskilled labor in the Ivory Coast is imported from the north. The workers are being brought down by plane nowadays because this eliminates desertions in transit and saves money in the long run. [redacted] recruited 200 workers several years ago but arrived at Oumé with only 40. Their train fare was paid to Oumé but most of them got off 40 to 50 kilometers from home to look for work. They emphasized, as did [redacted] that employers must treat the workers well to keep them. For some reason most of the unskilled Africans in the area are interested chiefly in acquiring a hat and a pair of sunglasses and often stop working once they have earned enough money to buy these things. Skilled and semi-skilled African labor is much more stable, however. [redacted] said that labor is not at all well organized in the Ivory Coast, notwithstanding a general belief to the contrary. Such organized labor as exists is under RDA political control. Neither man knew of any relationship between Ivory Coast and Gold Coast labor groups.

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DAHOMEY25X1X  
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Abomey, Dahomey. There are two important labor groups in Bas Dahomey and both of them are Communist-oriented. One is the union of the railroad workers and the other is the union of employees in private enterprise. The Force Ouvriere exists in Dahomey but has thus far made little headway. The two major unions are linked with Ivory Coast labor groups. [redacted] taking the same position as several of my informants in Niger, said that it is a mistake to train too many African workers because of the uncertainty of suitable outlets for their knowledge. In Dahomey at present there is enough work for them, but Fondes

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d'Investissements pour le Developpement Economique et Social (FIDES) is tapering off and construction cannot go on indefinitely. It is possible that the mining industry will develop to the point of being able to absorb an appreciable number of trained Africans, but this is only a possibility. [REDACTED] thinks that FIDES is too ambitious an effort and that the average French taxpayer should not be required to pay twelve thousand francs a year for overseas territories.

MAURITANIA

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11. [REDACTED] Mauritania. Eighty percent of the Mauritanian workers are unionized, partly because union membership has come to be regarded as fashionable. The native workers like offices and office-holders and feel that their connection with such things gives them prestige. There are three major unions in Mauritania--the Force Ouvriere, the CGT, and the Travailleurs Groyants--and there is great rivalry among them. In early October 1953 a strike fizzled because two of the unions, jealous of the fact that the third had called its workers out first, cancelled their strike plans. This rivalry has made most strikes in Mauritania only partly effective. The three chief labor centers in Mauritania are at Port Etienne, Akjoujt, and Atar. Mine labor is chiefly Moorish, the Moors taking very well to this kind of work. The real labor trouble in Mauritania, according to [REDACTED] is caused by the intense racial rivalry between Moorish and Negro workers. The Moors, old slave traders, despise the Negroes and the latter, remembering the slave raids, breathe vengeance. As to the future implications of this racial antagonism, the Moorish population is increasing slightly, although it is usually spoken of as constant, while the Negroes on the other hand are increasing rapidly, thanks to la paix Francaise. [REDACTED] expects the two peoples to be about equal in numbers within the "visible future". One of the present political effects of Moorish-Negro antagonism is that nationalistic passions in Mauritania bypass the Europeans and are mutually directed against the white Moors and the black Africans.

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